

The Jacob Journal

A NEWSLETTER FROM SUPERVISOR DIANNE JACOB

MARCH 1998

Improving the Health of San Diegans

All too often, I am approached by concerned citizens about the state of healthcare today. The concerns come from people of all ages and of all backgrounds. Some are insured, and some are uninsured. For all of their differences, many of the concerns come back to "access" and "quality" of healthcare.

That's why almost a year ago, I asked the Board of Supervisors to support the creation of a Regional Healthcare Advisory Council to focus on these concerns. What's unique about the Council is that it consists of five nationally-recognized healthcare experts, as well as local healthcare professionals.

The National experts were given three charges: First, to evaluate the current healthcare delivery system in San Diego County. Second, assuming there will be no additional money coming into the County for healthcare, predict what San Diego County healthcare will look like in two to five years if we do nothing. Third, offer recommendations for change that will ensure accessibility to quality healthcare to the people of San Diego County.

The goal is simple: to improve healthcare for the people of San Diego and make sure that the patient is always put first!

After eight months of work, the five National experts, who have no local vested interests, formally issued a report

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entitled "Partners In Health". Not only did it capture the cooperative spirit of all the local healthcare experts, who are enthusiastically working together in an unprecedented partnership to improve the region's healthcare, it pointed out some of the inherent strengths in San Diego's healthcare community — such as high caliber physicians; a distinguished academic medical center; a strong biotech research community; and an innovative County government experienced in consolidation with a public health department now integrated with human services into a strong agency.

On the other hand, "Partners In Health" warned of severe consequences if we do nothing. Not only is inaction expected to result in less choice and fewer options, it will result in higher out-of-pocket costs for the insured and higher costs for employers. It is also expected that the number of uninsured residents, which is currently about one in four, will grow and there will be a decrease in the overall quality of healthcare region-wide.

Doing nothing is clearly not an option. So, what should be done?

The National experts proposed five objectives with several recommendations to improve and ensure access to quality healthcare. Several are of particular interest to me. They deal with children's health, consumer satisfaction, and pooling employer purchasing power.

The recommendation which could have the most far-reaching effect deals with pooling employer purchasing power. In San Diego County, private and public employers spend millions of dollars each year on healthcare for their employees with costs continuing to rise. The National experts suggested that by pooling employer purchasing

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power, employers could reduce costs with the same or better healthcare for their employees. Lower costs for health insurance may also extend coverage to the many working people who are without it. It's worth a try!

San Diego County also has the opportunity to lead the Nation in caring for children. In this region, an estimated 150,000 children are uninsured. However, a new State health insurance program called "Healthy Families" will provide coverage for low income children, and San Diego County can help assure that these children participate by actively assisting their families with enrollment. In addition, the National experts have suggested the County add flexibility to the use of existing healthcare dollars to maximize the number of children covered. By doing so, children who have never before had health insurance — or even seen a doctor — can start off their lives with appropriate primary and preventative care such as necessary immunizations.

Finally, it's hard to believe there are no standards to measure consumer satisfaction and the quality of our healthcare! For example, when you want to buy a car or a microwave, there are plenty of resources available to learn about the products. With something as critical as your family's healthcare, the same resources should be available. To provide the public with health information, the National experts recommended that information systems be developed. Also, a Healthcare Report Card to regularly report to the people the status of healthcare in the region is a part of their recommendations.

Now is the time for you to get involved. The Regional Healthcare Advisory Council needs to know what you think. Over the next few months, the local members of the council will review the report. From there, a local action plan will be developed. To make sure it works for San Diego, your input is crucial.

To receive a copy of "Partners In Health" or its executive summary, you may call my office at (619) 531-5522 or view it on my website at www.diannejacob.com. Your comments, questions and suggestions are welcome. You may write, e-mail, or come to the Board of Supervisors Meeting on March 17, 1998, at 9:30 am at the County Administration Building at 1600 Pacific Highway in San Diego. "Partners In Health" will be presented to the Board of Supervisors by Dr. Joan McIver-Gibson, Director of the Health Sciences Ethics Program at the University of New Mexico, and one of the National experts.

A great challenge and a great opportunity faces all of us. I urge you to get involved. Your health depends on you!

Supervisor Dianne Jacob proudly serves the communities of:

Agua Caliente Springs ♦ Allied Gardens ♦ Alpine ♦ Barrett ♦ Blossom Valley ♦ Bostonia ♦ Boulevard ♦ Campo ♦ Casa de Oro ♦ Crest ♦ Cuyamaca ♦ Dehesa ♦ Del Cerro ♦ Descanso ♦ Dulzura ♦ El Cajon ♦ Eucalyptus Hills ♦ Fernbrook ♦ Flinn Springs ♦ Granite Hills ♦ Guatay ♦ Harbison Canyon ♦ Jacumba ♦ Jamul ♦ Julian ♦ La Mesa ♦ Lake Morena ♦ Lakeside ♦ Lemon Grove ♦ Mount Laguna ♦ Mount Helix ♦ Pine Hills ♦ Pine Valley ♦ Potrero ♦ Poway ♦ Ramona ♦ Rancho San Diego ♦ Rolando ♦ San Carlos ♦ Santa Ysabel ♦ Santee ♦ Shelter Valley ♦ Spring Valley ♦ Tecate ♦ Tierra del Sol ♦ Vallecitos

...and the Indian reservations of:

Barona ♦ Campo ♦ Capitan Grande ♦ Cosmit ♦ Cuyapaipe ♦ Inaja ♦ Jamul ♦ La Posta ♦ Manzanita ♦ Santa Ysabel ♦ Sycuan ♦ Viejas

QUOTA SYSTEM THROWN OUT

Jacob Applauds Historic Ruling

San Diego — Supervisor Dianne Jacob joined Deputy County Counsel Ian Fan in Federal Court on February 23, 1998, as a Federal judge ruled to dissolve the County's Consent Decree. In 1995, then-Chairwoman Jacob in her State of the County address called for the complete repeal of the Consent Decree, a court-ordered quota system for County hiring and personnel practices which has been in place since 1977.

A longtime advocate for the elimination of preferential treatment, Jacob was pleased with the action. "I applaud the Court for finally recognizing that the time has come to toss out antiquated systems of artificial equalization," she said. "Employment decisions should be based on performance and qualifications, not quotas!"

Rather than a quota system, the County has a recently-adopted Diversity Plan, which assures equal opportunity and a level playing field for all persons who wish to be employed or contract with the County of San Diego.

on the web
www.diannejacob.com

Efficiency In Government? YES!

Governing Magazine recently surveyed governments with annual budgets of \$1 billion or more to determine which one's were most efficient. They ranked the jurisdictions by the number of employees per 10,000 residents.

Here's how it broke down:

Orange County

61

San Diego County

65

Alameda County

77

Riverside & San Bernardino Counties

88 each

Los Angeles & Contra Costa Counties

91 each

Santa Clara County

105

Sacramento County

121

We're pretty proud that San Diego ranked second of all of California's counties -- and next year we're shootin' for first!

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We hope to hear from you soon!

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